

Before articulating briefly what Free-Form Radio is, it behooves me to scream out once and for all what free-form radio--in fact, what the medium of radio itself--is not. It is not Music, however varied and intelligently programmed. Radio, especially of the free-form variety, certainly includes music. But contrary to what "progressive" radio folk would have you believe, there isn't much creativity in just playing recorded music. Any laboratory ape can do it with varying degrees of appeal.

So what is free-form radio? Above all, free-form radio transcends definition. It is Zen Radio. It can best be defined by adjectives: it is unpredictable, flexible, fun, innovative, alternately exciting and tedious, anarchic, adventurous, disastrous, different. It is all these and none of these and much more. Ver-
stehen Sie?

Free-form radio is unpredictable in that the listener, tuning in at random, will never know what to expect, except the unexpected. It is flexible in that programs don't have to end precisely on schedule. It is different in that those who practice free-form are generally disaffected from and disgusted with commercial radio and want to offer their listenership an

alternative. It is both exciting and tedious in that free-form radio is experimental, and therefore accountable to a statistical success/failure rate.* Unlike "block programming," it is opposed to segregation of musical styles.

So what exactly can one expect from a station or a personality that alleges to be "free-form"? One can expect The Beatles and Roland Kirk; a reading from "archy & mehitable"; a listener phoning in to discuss black/white tensions; the Firesign Theatre; a bluegrass band performing live in the studio; a news story about the impending ice age; Patti Smith and Julie London, following a childhood reminiscence; public service announcements and a ride board; Antonio Vivaldi; an interview with a taxi driver.

It is, again, all of these and none of these and much more, in any given sequence. Free-form is an approach to radio that, once practiced, will probably forever exclude you from work in commercial radio.